

Yokuts language

Yokuts, formerly known as **Mariposa**, is an endangered language spoken in the interior of Northern and Central California in and around the San Joaquin Valley by the Yokuts people. The speakers of Yokuts were severely affected by disease, missionaries, and the Gold Rush. While descendants of Yokuts speakers currently number in the thousands, most of the constituent dialects are now extinct.

The Yawelmani dialect of Valley Yokuts has been a focus of much linguistic research.

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Dialects

The Yokuts language consists of half a dozen primary dialects. An estimated forty linguistically distinct groups existed before Euro-American contact. The following classification appears in Whistler & Golla (1986).

Poso Creek

- Palewyami Yokuts (also known as Poso Creek, Altinin)

General Yokuts (all others)


- **Buena Vista**

Tulamni
Hometwali

- **Nim**

- Tule–Kaweah

Wukchumni

Yokuts	
Mariposa	
Region	San Joaquin Valley, California
Ethnicity	Yokuts
Native speakers	Unknown <p>20–25 fluent and semispeakers (Golla 2007)</p>
Language family	Yok-Utian <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Yokuts
Dialects	Palewyami † <p>Buena Vista †</p> <p>Tule–Kaweah</p> <p>Gashowu †</p> <p>Kings River †</p> <p>Valley Yokuts</p>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	yok
Glottolog	yoku1255 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/yoku1255) ^[1]
	
Pre-contact distribution of the Yokuts language	

Yawdanchi (also known as Nutaa)
Bokninuwad

- Northern Yokuts

- Gashowu
- Kings River

Chukaymina
Michahay
Ayitcha (also known as Aiticha, Kocheyalı)
Choynimni (also spelled Choinimni)

- Valley Yokuts (see)



Map of Yokuts with dialects indicated

Speakers and language revitalization

Most Yokuts dialects are extinct, as noted above. Those that are still spoken are endangered.

Until recent years, Choinimni, Wikchamni, Chukchansi, Kechayi, Tachi and Yawelmani all had a few fluent speakers and a variable number of partial speakers. Choynimni went extinct in 2017. Wikchamni, Chukchansi, Tachi, and Yawelmani were being taught to at least a few children during the first decade of the twenty-first century.



Yokutsan family "bush" (i.e. multi-branching tree) (Whistler & Golla 1986)

Chukchansi is now a written language, with its own alphabet developed on a federal grant. Chukchansi also has a phrase book and dictionary that are partially completed. In May 2012, the Linguistics Department of Fresno State University received a \$1 million grant to compile a Chukchansi dictionary and grammar texts,^[2] and to "provide support for scholarships, programs, and efforts to assemble native texts and create a curriculum for teaching the language so it can be brought back into social and ritual use."^[3]

Genetic relations

Yokutsan is a key member in the proposed Penutian language stock. Some linguists consider most relationships within Penutian to be undemonstrated (cf. Campbell 1997). Others consider a genetic relationship between Yokuts, Utian, Maiduan, Wintuan, and a number of Oregon languages to be definite (cf. DeLancey and Golla 1997). Regardless of higher-order disagreement, Callaghan (1997) provides strong evidence uniting Yokuts and the Utian languages as branches of a Yok-Utian language family.

The term "Delta Yokuts" has recently been introduced in lieu of the longer "Far Northern Valley Yokuts" for the dialect spoken by the people in the present Stockton and Modesto vicinities of San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, California, prior to their removal to Mission San Jose between 1810 and 1827. Of interest, Delta Yokuts contains a large number of words with no cognates in any of the other dialects, or for that matter in the adjacent Utian languages, although its syntax is typically Northern Valley Yokuts (Kroeber 1959:15-17). This anomaly has led Whistler (cited by Golla 2007:76) to suggest, "The vocabulary distinctive of some of the Delta Yokuts dialects may reflect substratal influence from pre-proto-Yokuts or

from an extinct Yok-Utian language." Golla (2007:77) suggests that a "pre-proto-Yokuts" homeland was in the Great Basin, citing a rich plant and animal vocabulary for a dry environment and a close connection between Yokuts basketry styles and those of prehistoric central Nevada.

Proto-language

Proto-Yokuts reconstructions from Whistler and Golla (1986):^[4]

Proto-Yokuts
Reconstruction of Yokuts languages

gloss	Proto-Yokuts
acorn	*p ^h ut ^h uʂ
beaver	*t'ɪ: pɪk ^h ~ *t'ɪ: pɪk ^h
blood	*hɪ: pa-ʔ
bone	*c'iy
child	*wit ^h ip
child (diminutive)	*wic ^h ip
coyote	*k ^h ay'iw
eight	*mun'us
eye	*sasa-ʔ
fingernail	*xi: six
fire	*ʔoʂit ^h
fish	*lop ^h iʈ ^h
flea	*p'a: k'il
friend	*no: c ^h i
head louse	*t ^h ihit ^h
heart	*ʔuʂik'
horn	*ɪʂɪ'
mountain	*lomit ^h
mouth	*sama-ʔ
north	*xosim
nose	*t ^h ɪŋɪk'
shaman	*ʔaŋt ^h iw
skunk	*c ^h ox
sky	*t ^h ip ^h in
star	*c'ayatas
string	*c'ikiy
tears	*maŋal
three	*ʂo: p ^h in
two	*ponjy
water	*ʔilik'

See also

- [Yokuts people](#)

References

1. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Yokutsan" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/yoku1255>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
 2. "Chukchansi language to be preserved with grant" (<http://abclocal.go.com/kfsn/video?id=8650667>). abc30.com. 2:14 minutes in. Retrieved 2012-09-01. Missing or empty |series= ([help](#))
 3. "Fresno State Receives \$1 Million to Preserve, Revitalize Chukchansi Language" (<http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/news/story.jhtml?id=379200012>). *Foundation Center Philanthropy News Digest*. 2012-05-13. Retrieved 2012-09-01.
 4. Whistler, Kenneth; Golla, Victor (1986). "Proto-Yokuts Reconsidered". *International Journal of American Linguistics*. **52** (4): 317–358. doi:10.1086/466028 (<https://doi.org/10.1086%2F466028>).
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External links

- [Yokuts \(http://www.fourdir.com/yokuts.htm\)](http://www.fourdir.com/yokuts.htm)
 - [Yokuts languages fonts \(http://www.languagegeek.com/california/yokuts.html\)](http://www.languagegeek.com/california/yokuts.html), Languagegeek.com
 - [Yokuts \(Northern Foothill\): Lord's prayer \(http://www.language-museum.com/encyclopedia/yokuts-northern-foothill.php\)](http://www.language-museum.com/encyclopedia/yokuts-northern-foothill.php)
 - [Chawchila metathesis \(https://web.archive.org/web/20051023061842/http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~ehume/metathesis/Chawchila.html\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20051023061842/http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~ehume/metathesis/Chawchila.html)
 - [Native Tribes, Groups, Language Families and Dialects of California in 1770 \(http://www.californiaprehistory.com/tribemap.html\)](http://www.californiaprehistory.com/tribemap.html) (map after Kroeber)
 - [Yokuts languages language \(http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~survey/languages/yokuts.php\)](http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~survey/languages/yokuts.php) overview at the [Survey of California and Other Indian Languages](#)
 - ["OLAC resources in and about the Yokuts language" \(http://www.language-archives.org/language/yok\)](http://www.language-archives.org/language/yok). Retrieved 2012-07-30.
 - ["General Yokuts – California Language Archive" \(http://cla.berkeley.edu/language/717?tab=items&drestriction=none\)](http://cla.berkeley.edu/language/717?tab=items&drestriction=none). Retrieved 2012-07-30.
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